



## A TRIBUTE TO THOMAS O. EISEMON

TOM EISEMON, a distinguished contributor to cognitive and social science passed away April 21st, 1998, in Fairfax, Virginia. He was 54.

Tom was born in Cleveland, Ohio. He completed his M.A. in Indian Studies and a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, following which, he joined the departments of Educational Psychology and Administration and Policy Studies at McGill University in 1974. At McGill, Tom was the co-director of Cognitive and Ethnographic Studies in Education and a co-director of the Center for Developing Area Studies. He was actively involved in research with support from the International Research Development Centre, USAID, and was a research team leader for the BRIDGES project at Harvard University's Institute for International Studies. His scholarly contributions include seven books and more than 150 journal articles and book chapters, addressing a broad range of issues in adult literacy and professional and scientific development. In 1991, Tom joined the World Bank and soon after was promoted to senior education specialist in the Department of Population and Human Resources

Tom was a true intellectual. Over the years, his work evolved to include complex educational issues in the developing countries. In the past fourteen years, he devoted considerable energy to developing greater understanding of two of his main interests: adult text comprehension and professional development in higher education. These shared interests led to a long and fruitful collaboration. Working with him strengthened my understanding of the importance of social awareness and responsibility to the community. This was evident from the time I first began working with him in 1985, initially in Egypt, and later in Kenya and Ethiopia. He brought deep understanding of the local cultural values and sharp analytical skills to the problem of comprehending proce-

dures for using oral rehydration therapy by mothers for treating dehydration in children. These projects led to eight joint journal publications. At the time of his death, he was in the process of negotiating a book for the monograph series *Studies in Cognitive Science and Technology*, edited by Lesgold and Patel.

He had a passionate commitment to improving the educational status of underprivileged people. His devout adherence to schedules, working long hours in "hands on" field work, with evenings spent writing research reports, were all a part of this commitment. Tom was quick to recognize new and challenging ideas. He was even quicker at rejecting poor ideas, showing utter intolerance for any policy that poorly served the underprivileged, as evident while working with him on professional development in Romania. This was his strength but would occasionally offend individuals who appeared to present obstacles to progress. Tom thrived in environments that provided freedom of expression of ideas. He challenged conventional assumptions with controversial new ideas. He didn't always succeed. But he never gave up the fight.

Tom was a friend of the Centre for Medical Education at McGill. Many messages were received at the Centre expressing the significance of Tom's contributions to professional development in health education. Our close working relationship over the last fourteen years also developed into a strong bond of friendship. Those who knew and understood him will always remember him fondly. His legacy will endure in the academic and organizational communities in which he made distinguished contributions. I will miss him.

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